



## San Francisco Department of Public Health

Grant Colfax, MD  
Director of Health

City and County of San Francisco  
London N. Breed  
Mayor

# Director's Report for Health Commission Meeting of April 18, 2023

*A current overview of issues affecting the state of public health in San Francisco*

<https://www.dph.org/dph/comupg/aboutdph/insideDept/dirRpts/default.asp>

*Today, there are over 197,792 San Francisco residents with confirmed cases of COVID-19. And, sadly, a total of 1,186 San Franciscans have died. The San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH) sends our condolences to their loved ones.*

### **DPH OPENS 70 NEW BEHAVIORAL HEALTH BEDS**

Mayor London N. Breed and DPH announced the opening of a new 70-bed residential step-down program in Treasure Island. The addition of these new beds represents significant progress toward the City's goal to provide new health care and treatment programs for people with mental health and substance use challenges.

San Francisco has a robust network of behavioral health services. Adding these new beds to the City's [existing 2,200 behavioral health beds](#) is part of DPH's commitment to care for and treat people who struggle with mental health and substance use. Over the past two years, DPH has opened 250 additional residential care and treatment beds.

The additional 70 residential step-down beds will provide clients with transitional recovery housing for up to two years following completion of their residential treatment for substance use disorder. During their stay, these individuals will receive support while they participate in outpatient treatment and seek employment.

DPH is partnering with HealthRIGHT 360 to operate the new program at Treasure Island; the organization has already started accepting clients and the beds will be utilized over the course of the next several months.



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Increasing the number of behavioral health beds is a data driven plan based upon the City's [Behavioral Health Bed Optimization Report](#) released in 2020, the City's utilization data from ongoing data collection at [findtreatment-sf](#), and identified services gaps. DPH opened the 20-bed SoMa RISE Drug Sobering Center and the 75-bed Minna Project last year. Updates on San Francisco's expansion of behavioral health beds is available at <https://sf.gov/residential-care-and-treatment>.

DPH provides a daily update of its available mental health and substance use treatment beds, which may be found here: [www.findtreatmentsf.org](http://www.findtreatmentsf.org).

### **PREHOSPITAL BUPRENORPHINE PROGRAM TO COMBAT OPIOID EPIDEMIC LAUNCHED**

San Francisco launched a new program to expand buprenorphine distribution by emergency responders as part of the City's efforts to reduce opioid overdoses. Buprenorphine helps reduce opioid withdrawal and cravings and, along with methadone, is the most effective treatment for opioid use disorder, reducing the risk of overdose fatalities by up to 50%.

Under this new initiative, emergency personnel from the San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD) will administer buprenorphine in the field prior to taking individuals to a hospital, expanding access to support patients who are experiencing opioid withdrawals. The program started April 1.

This effort builds on the DPH work to expand access to buprenorphine citywide, through a range of programs and services. This includes at hospitals and clinics, DPH Community Behavioral Health Pharmacy, shelters and navigation centers, jail, by delivery in City permanent supportive housing, and other settings.

For years, the prescription of buprenorphine was heavily regulated, which prevented emergency responders from being able to administer it in a prehospital setting. In December of last year, President Joe Biden signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 which relaxed federal regulations to grant more medical professionals the ability to prescribe this treatment, which like methadone reduces the risk of death by 40-50%. This change in regulations allowed the City to launch this new program by SFFD.



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The program will be implemented in partnership with local emergency medical services (EMS) and addiction treatment providers. EMS personnel will receive training on the administration of buprenorphine and how to connect patients with addiction treatment resources. Emergency responders are often the first on the scene of an overdose, and the ability to administer this treatment in the field can make an immediate and meaningful difference for those grappling with addiction.

Under DPH's leadership, twice as many people are receiving buprenorphine treatment since 2013 and three times as many people since 2010. More than 3,100 people in San Francisco received this treatment for opioid use disorder in 2021.

With this news, Mayor Breed issued an instruction on Thursday, March 30, requesting departments propose additional options to reduce additional General Fund support, equivalent to at least another 5% in each year, by April 7<sup>th</sup>. For DPH, a 5% reduction represents approximately \$50 million of savings in its annual budget. Given the magnitude of this request, the Mayor's Office has agreed to allow DPH to submit its proposal after the April 18<sup>th</sup> Health Commission. While department staff will begin working on developing a plan to meet the instructions and will bring back additional proposals at the next Health Commission for its review and approval.

Expanding access to buprenorphine is part of the City's [Overdose Prevention Plan](#), which aims to reduce fentanyl and other drug-related deaths, increase access to treatment for opioid use disorder (including addiction to fentanyl) and stimulant use disorder, increase social support for and reduce the stigma experienced by people at risk of overdose, and improve the community conditions in which drug use occurs.

### **ACKNOWLEDGING DPH ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ON EARTH DAY**

Earth Day is celebrated annually on April 22 by answering calls to environmental action and raising awareness about the importance of protecting our natural resources for future generations. At DPH, Earth Day is an opportunity to recognize the many ways that our Environmental Health Branch works to keep the people of San Francisco safe.

As a preventative branch of public health enforcing 40-50 local health ordinances as well as state



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laws, our Environmental Health workers do a remarkable job. Commensurate with the scope of its activities, it is the largest branch in Population Health with, when fully staffed, around 160 employees operating more than 30 programs covering land, air, water, homes, schools, and businesses.

Dozens of health inspectors work in our Consumer Protection program to visit businesses throughout the City and ensure that restaurants, pop-ups, cottage food operations, caterers, stadium concessions and other food facilities are preparing and selling food in a safe and sanitary manner. These inspectors also regulate tattoo, body art and massage establishments to make sure they are offering these services in compliance with local and state laws.

Every week, Environmental Health tests the waters at our local beaches and piers to determine whether it is safe for swimming and fishing and posts advisory signage. The Water Quality Program also regulates and monitors swimming pools and spas to prevent drownings and the spread of infectious diseases, and helps buildings safely capture and treat rainwater and graywater for reuse onsite for toilet flushing and irrigation.

There may be an increase in mosquitos in San Francisco due to the recent rain. Fortunately, our certified vector control technicians are working diligently to eliminate mosquitoes, as well as rodents and other insects that spread diseases like West Nile virus.

Some Environmental Health programs focus on protecting public health, safety, and the environment from the impacts of hazardous materials release and management of hazardous waste and solid waste. The Hazardous Materials and Waste Program regulates businesses that store, use, or handle hazardous materials, hazardous waste and medical waste. The Site Assessment and Mitigation Program provides regulatory oversight of characterization and mitigation or cleanup of hazardous substances found in soil, soil vapor, and groundwater. The Solid Waste Program regulates refuse collection, solid waste sites and mandates refuse service for all San Francisco businesses and residents.

The Tobacco Program works collaboratively with other DPH branches to prevent tobacco sales to minors and to reduce the availability of harmful tobacco products. The Apartment Inspection Program works to ensure that multi-unit apartments maintain healthy environmental conditions. For



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new construction in areas with poor air quality, we require enhanced ventilation systems to protect residents from respiratory and heart effects.

The Children's Environmental Health Promotion Program tackles issues surrounding lead, asthma, housing insecurity, and other social determinants of health. The Childhood Lead Prevention Program, in particular, has been extremely effective in protecting San Francisco children from the harmful effects of lead exposure since it launched in 1993.

This may seem like an exhaustive listing, but the above programs and services are actually just a portion of all the work that our Environmental Health Branch does to keep people safe. Moreover, this branch is continuously evolving and adapting to new regulations and laws to stay on the best course to ensure a safe and healthy San Francisco. Thank you to DPH Environmental Health staff for all they do to make our city a better place to live and play.

### **DPH NURSING CAREER FAIR**

On Saturday, April 8, DPH hosted a Registered Nurse Career Fair at ZSFG Hospital for prospective RNs to learn more about the exciting nursing opportunities available throughout DPH. There were three sessions where we welcomed 100 potential new team members to meet the Nursing Leadership Team, tour the hospital, speak with other ZSFG registered nurses, meet HR representatives to ask questions and learn about the application and hiring process with the City, and submit applications on site for nursing positions. This was a multi-departmental event that involved the hospital and HR staff. Nurses play a critical role in keeping San Francisco healthy and resilient and we are eager to expand our outreach with events like this that showcase the great work opportunities available here.

### **LAUNCH OF VIRTUAL LEAN TRAINING MODULES**

DPH's Kaizen Promotion Office is launching a series of Lean training modules called the Lean Foundation Series. DPH's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other priorities in the department have taught us the importance of problem solving, the use of data for improvement and the development of standard work.

Lean Basics is the first of the two series and consists of four 15-minute introductory modules to complete at your own pace. At the end of these modules, you can go into SF Learning in the



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Employee Portal to download your certificate of completion.

The topics include Introduction to Lean, Introduction to Problem Solving, Data for Improvement, and Introduction to Standard Work. They are available to all DPH employees by going to the SF Employee Portal and selecting the SF Learning website.

DPH leadership encourage managers, executives, and anyone new to Lean to take advantage of this new learning tool. As with any training, the principles and concepts will be most helpful when applied soon thereafter, so we encourage staff to consider up front how they will use the information to improve the care of patients and develop themselves and the team. This is the first series in several additional modules that will be created to help staff better understand how to apply Lean to their work. For those interested in Lean certification, completion of these modules is a requirement for certification.

### **COVID-19 UPDATE**

As of 4/12:

- San Francisco's 7-day rolling average of new COVID cases per day is 41 and 40 people are hospitalized, including 8 in the ICU.
- Eighty-six percent of all SF residents have been vaccinated and 65% have received booster dose(s). Thirty-nine percent of residents have received a bivalent booster.

### **[DPH in the News](#)**